

Montana's First Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan On Track

MONTANA PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE PLAN

MDT met with local governments, stakeholders, and the public to hear thoughts and opinions about walking and bicycling in Montana. MDT hosted six open houses/listening sessions in communities of varying sizes to best understand the differing needs and opinions across this vast state. As of May 25, approximately 1,700 individuals participated in the online survey, over 50 individual comments were received, and over 180 individuals have subscribed to email updates for the Plan.

The Plan primarily aims to establish a consistent approach for considering pedestrian and bicycle modes on state-owned and maintained facilities. It is not intended to identify specific projects, rather it will establish a common vision and goals to meet pedestrian and bicyclist needs, improve safety, and establish a more walk- and bike-friendly Montana.

Next steps include analyzing existing conditions as well as constraints and opportunities. So far, great feedback from the public has helped MDT assess focus areas for non-motorized transportation. Themes include: safety, education, system preservation and maintenance, accessibility, connectivity, mobility, health, economic vitality, and barriers and challenges.

Opinions, comments, and requests for Plan updates can be submitted to MDTBikePed@mt.gov or MDT Ped Bike, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. For more information about the Plan, visit: <https://mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/pedbike/>.

Bridge and Road Safety Funding Update

Since March 1 this year, MDT and local governments have been putting Bridge and Road Safety and Accountability Act (BaRSAA) funding to work improving roadways across the state. BaRSAA funding is generated by the increased user fee applied to gasoline and diesel fuel passed by the 65th Montana Legislature and made effective July 1, 2017.

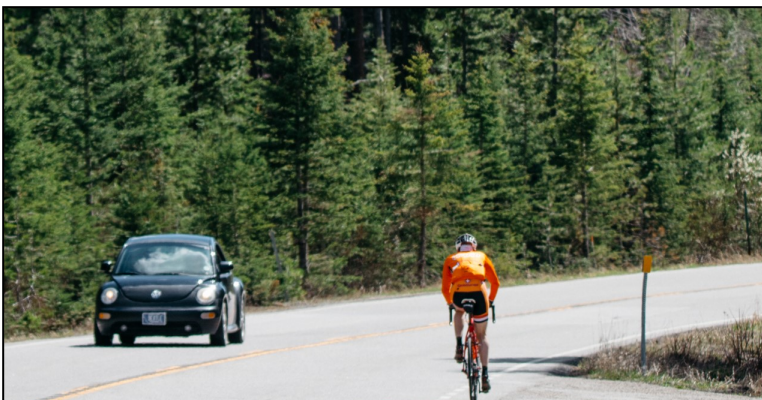
In 2018, MDT will receive a set amount of \$12.5 million from BaRSAA. In subsequent years, MDT will receive the greater of \$9.8 million or 35 percent of the revenue raised through BaRSAA. This increase in funding is intended to provide MDT with sufficient cash flow to sustain the match for federal aid construction funding.

The remaining revenue generated will be allocated to local governments (cities and counties) for road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of rural roads, city/town streets, alleys, and bridges. The allocation to local entities is based on the existing fuel tax allocation formula in statute and requires local entities to provide at least \$1 in local matching funds for every \$20 of BaRSAA funds distributed.

As of June 1, MDT has awarded 49 projects in all five MDT districts that will utilize BaRSAA funds. The total funds (BaRSAA and Federal) to be used on these projects is projected at over \$169.8M.

At the local level, \$6.2M of the revenue collected in 2017 has been allocated to local governments. As of June 1, \$2.4M of these BaRSAA funds have been requested by local governments for 62 projects totaling over \$9.9M. BaRSAA funds are vital to leveraging federal and local resources to maintain and preserve Montana's road and street network.

For additional information on the program or to find specific projects utilizing BaRSAA funds, visit: mdt.mt.gov/roadbridge/.



Biking Highway 212.



Bridge over the Blackfoot on I-90 near Missoula.

Teen Peer-to-Peer Traffic Safety Partnership

Imagine your teenage son driving his pickup truck down a rural, two-lane road, 20 miles per day 70 miles per hour to get to school, basketball practice, and his part-time job. This routine has become a habit and his mind is on things other than driving, including checking his cell phone for service. With this and other distractions, he is not thinking about his own safety as he makes the familiar daily trek. There are good odds he is not wearing a seatbelt.

Unfortunately, this scenario is all too familiar for many Montana teenagers. In the last 10 years, 242 teens were killed in car crashes. Of those, 53 percent were not wearing their seat belts. Teens represent 10.8 percent of all Montana traffic fatalities, yet only account for 6.7 percent of the population.

With the success of Peer-to-Peer traffic safety projects throughout the country, MDT partnered with Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) to launch a teen traffic safety program. Family, Career and Community Leaders of America is a student organization for young men and women in Family and Consumer Sciences education through grade 12. There are 65 chapters across Montana. To help fund this project, MDT successfully applied for a grant from Ford Driving Skills for Life (FDSL) to focus on teen traffic safety in 2017/2018. This project provided funding to FCCLA chapters to create and implement peer-to-peer traffic safety campaigns in their schools and communities.

Eleven FCCLA chapters received FDSL funding ranging from \$400 to \$750 in early November 2017. Sixteen FCCLA Chapters received up to \$1,000 of MDT grant funds to create and deliver their campaigns. The campaigns were completed by March 1 with all participating chapters submitting a report on their activity. Those reports were evaluated and scored, and prizes were awarded to the top three winners.

First Place: North Star High School (Rudyard) received \$2,500. North Star High School posted different safe driving messages on students' lockers each week, designated a traffic safety month, developed a YouTube video outlining all their projects with student testimonials, and educated the community, high schools and elementary schools on safe driving practices. Their video is located at: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=kBCyDSOqgZg>

Second Place: Garfield County High School received \$1,500. Garfield County High School conducted "fasten seat belt" contests with teens, developed educational material for elementary students, held texting and driving activities, and posted traffic safety banners and flyers throughout the community.

Third Place: Three Forks High School received \$1,000. Three Forks High School's campaign included a safe driving awareness week with traffic safety activities, buckle up signs placed around campus, banners, radio interviews, PSAs and outreach to elementary students. They also had a visit with Governor Bullock.

continued on next column

Teen Peer-to-Peer continued from previous column

MDT and FCCLA will continue their partnership for the



First Place Winner North Star High School (Rudyard).



Second Place Winner Garfield High School.



Third Place Winner Three Forks High School. Billings District Administrator Stefan Streeter appears in all three photos.

2018/2019 school year. With teens leading in traffic safety efforts for their peers, this project is a big winner for traffic safety and Montana. To learn more about Montana FCCLA go to: <https://mtfccla.org/>

For more information, contact Sheila Cozzie, at 444-7301 or scozzie@mt.gov.

Public Involvement/Stakeholder Survey Results

MDT administers public involvement and stakeholder surveys every two years as part of the TranPlanMT (MDT's long-range transportation policy plan) public involvement process. The surveys are conducted by the University of Montana as a statistically valid, random survey and identify changes in public and key transportation stakeholder group opinions on issues resulting from MDT policies and programs.

According to the most recent 2017 Biennial TranPlanMT Public Involvement Survey, Montanans want more facilities, equipment or services for passenger rail service.

Montanans viewed nearly all problems studied as small, reinforcing the positive overall level of satisfaction with the transportation system. Only one problem was viewed as moderately severe, which was road pavement condition.

Montanans indicated that the highest priority possible actions to improve the system are:

- Maintain road pavement condition
- Improve the physical condition of the interstate and major highways
- Improve transportation safety
- Include wildlife crossings and barriers.

In 2017, the rating system changed from a 1-10 scale to a 0-10 scale. This methodology change creates more balance and accuracy within the survey; however, it is expected that the average responses will be lower. Therefore, trend analysis will be more meaningful in future years once a few survey cycles are completed under this new methodology.

Airports, interstate highways, and rest areas remain the highest ranked in satisfaction. Performance and customer service grades remain average or above average between B- and C+. The highest grade was a B- for MDT's sensitivity to the environment. The lowest grade was a C for MDT's responsiveness to customer ideas and concerns.

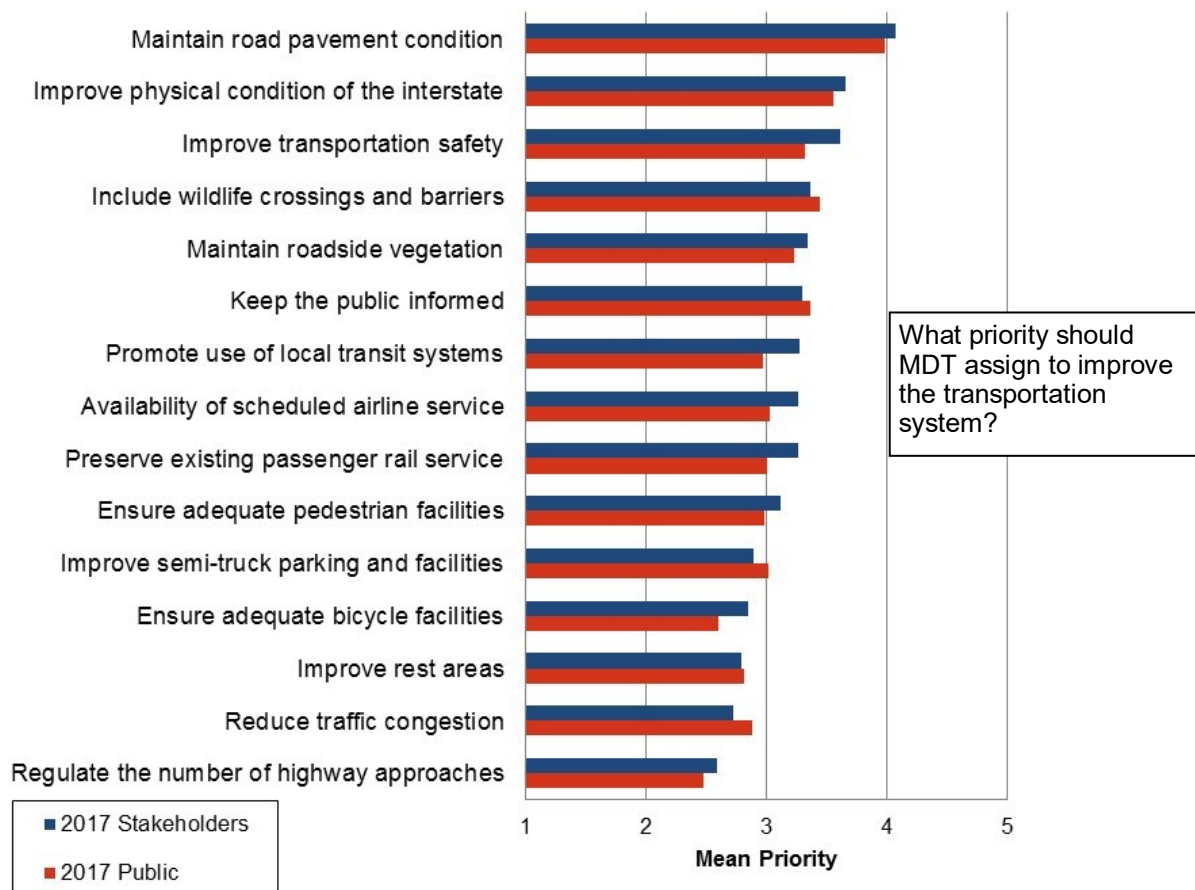
In addition to the public survey, MDT's transportation stakeholder groups survey continues to be compared to past public and stakeholder surveys. Stakeholder opinions closely match the public opinions. Stakeholders graded MDT's performance slightly higher in all categories than the public, with the average grade being a B-.

Both the public and stakeholders were asked to evaluate potential aspects of the transportation system to decrease funding in the event MDT's overall funding was decreased. Both groups agreed that the least preferred choices were other major highways, maintenance, and interstate highways. Bicycle pathways, pedestrian walkways, local transit buses and rest areas ranked as the most preferable areas to decrease funding if necessary. The complete results of the 2017 public and stakeholder surveys are available online at:

https://mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/surveys/2017_tranplan21_public_involvement.pdf

https://mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/surveys/2017_tranplan21_stakeholder.pdf

For more information, contact Sandra Waddell at 444-7614 or swaddell@mt.gov.



Vision Zero Progress and Summer Driving



VISION ZERO
zero deaths · zero serious injuries

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION**

Montana is making progress toward the Vision Zero goal of *Zero Fatalities and Zero Serious Injuries*. Crashes and fatalities are trending downward with the number of crash fatalities nine percent lower between 2013-2017 compared to the previous five years.

Also notable, for the first time in over a decade there was a four-week stretch with no roadway fatalities in the state. This occurred from February to March 2018.

While this direction is encouraging, drivers need to continue to remain alert and drive responsibly as summer driving season gets into full swing. Historically, traffic deaths and injuries spike in Montana between May and August. Over 40 percent of all fatal crashes occur during the summer months and driver behavior plays a big part in these crashes. The contributing factors of speed, impaired driving, distraction and lack of seatbelt use are all things drivers have control over as they plan their trips.

Taking preventive measures is critical in reaching Vision Zero, *Zero Fatalities and Zero Serious Injuries*. For more information on safe driving, visit the Vision Zero – *Zero Deaths, Zero Serious Injuries* site: <https://mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/>.

Contact the State Highway Traffic Safety Section, Janet Kenny, at 444-7417 or jakenny@mt.gov for more information.

Construction Season Ramping Up

MDT summer construction is ramping up, which can mean some delays, slower travel, and rougher surfaces in construction zones. Travelers are urged to check the MDT Travel Information website, call 511, or download the travel information mobile app – MDT Travinfo to plan routes and travel time.

MDT does everything possible to minimize the inconvenience of construction and asks motorists to play a part in keeping themselves and workers safe. In work zones:

- Stay extra alert and give your full attention to driving
- Obey road signs and follow instructions from work zone flaggers
- Turn on headlights so workers and motorists see your vehicle
- Do not tailgate
- Do not drive faster than the posted speed
- Unless instructed, do not change lanes in work zones.

Get additional work zone and safety information at <https://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>.

Emergency Medical Services Grant — Apply by June 30, 2018

MDT has opened the state fiscal year 2019 grant application round for the Emergency Medical Services Grants to enhance traffic safety in Montana. The purpose of the program is to provide grants to mostly volunteer, Medicare-level billing providers for emergency response vehicles, ambulances, equipment to provide medical care, communications equipment, and training. Approximately \$1 million is granted annually through the program. Grant recipients are required to provide a ten percent match for any grant funds received.

Online application: Applications will only be accepted through the Montana Grants and Loan Web grants system: <https://fundingmt.org/index.do>. Applicants need to register and submit an application through the Web-based system.

For program eligibility and the application process, see MDT's website at:

https://mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_ems.shtml.

For more information, contact Chad Newman at chnewman@mt.gov or 444-0856.



Russell Street construction—bike and pedestrian detour.



Whitehall road and bridge construction project.



Summer brings nice weather, longer days and more travelers on Montana roadways, including motorcyclists. In the last five years, 129 motorcyclists have died and nearly 695 have been seriously injured in motorcycle crashes, occurring mostly during the months of May through September. MDT reminds you to take a second look before pulling out into traffic or turning left. Give these fellow travelers extra room to help make their way safely along our roads.

Prevention of motorcycle crashes is critical to reaching Vision Zero, zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana roads. These tips can help avoid crashes with motorcycles:

Tips for drivers:

- Respect all other vehicles on the road.
- Keep full attention on driving and avoid distractions.
- Allow motorcyclist the full lane width – never try to share a lane.
- Perform a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots at intersections and before entering or exiting a lane of traffic.
- Always signal your intention to change lanes or when merging with traffic.
- Allow more following distance behind a motorcycle so they have enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never drive impaired.

Tips for motorcycle riders:

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet.
- Be highly visible; wear brightly colored or reflective protective gear and turn on your headlights.
- Strategically use your lane position to see and be seen.
- Stay alert – and slow down when approaching left turns or intersections in anticipation of other driver's actions.
- Use turn signals in advance when changing lanes or making a turn.
- Never ride impaired.
- Observe speed limits – over half of fatal motorcycle crashes are speed related.
- Participate in a motorcycle safety course (<https://motorcycle.msun.edu>).

MDT partners with MSU Northern's Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety program. Training courses are available and space is open in the Basic Rider Course - 15 hours of training for novice or beginning riders, the Basic Rider Course 2 designed for experienced riders to brush up skills and experience street riding traffic experiences, and the Advanced Rider Course advanced skill development based on sport bike riding techniques and safety awareness.

For more information and to register for a course, visit: <https://motorcycle.msun.edu> or call 1-800-922-BIKE.

Safety Reminders for Sharing the Road

It's summertime in the Treasure state which means more people will be enjoying our state on foot and by bicycle. In line with MDT's goal of Vision Zero, we ask all users to be attentive and courteous when using the transportation system.

Motorists should expect bicyclists to be sharing the road. Avoid distractions while driving and watch for cyclists and pedestrians, including when entering or exiting parking spaces. Be courteous and give three to five feet of space when passing a cyclist on the roadway. Watch for and yield to pedestrians crossing at uncontrolled intersections or marked crosswalks. When turning at intersections, it is important to look for bicyclists and pedestrians who may be crossing the street.

Bicyclists should also avoid distractions while riding. Increase your visibility by wearing bright colored clothes and use reflective materials and bike lights. Be predictable and use hand signals when changing lanes, stopping, and turning. Obey the same traffic laws as a motor vehicle. Always wear a helmet, ride single file, and ride in the same direction as vehicular traffic.

Pedestrians, like all other users, should avoid distractions when walking, especially when crossing the street. Look left, right, then left again before entering the roadway. Be predictable, use crosswalks, and follow pedestrian crossing signals. Wear bright or reflective clothing, especially at dawn, dusk, and night.

We can't reach Vision Zero without complete support of every Montanan. Together, we can save lives.



Bicycling the Big Sky Map Available Soon



MDT recently updated the Bicycling the Big Sky map. This informational map is a great resource for those who want to travel along Montana highways by bicycle.

MDT's Geospatial Section and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program manager worked diligently to update the map after collecting the most recent data for shoulder widths, rumble strips, and the annual average daily traffic. The new map will be available for distribution early this summer.

To order maps, contact Michelle Wheat at 444-9273 or MiWheat@mt.gov.

MDT Rockfall Hazard Process Assessment — Winner of High Value Research Award

MDT's Rockfall Hazard Process Assessment research project was recently selected as one of the top 16 research projects in the country by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Each year, AASHTO department of transportation members submit research projects for consideration as High Value Research. The top four rated research projects in each of the four AASHTO regions form the "Sweet Sixteen" of High Value Research.

The project examined MDT's Rockfall Hazard Rating System (RHRS) developed in 2005 to address the danger of rocks falling on roadways. RHRS was developed to address concerns on roads constructed from the 1940s through the 1970s, when highways were built with nominal excavation. While this construction practice accelerated the completion of the highway system we know and use today, it left today's drivers to pass along thousands of rock slopes throughout Montana's mountainous region.

Project research results were used to update the RHRS, the RHRS database, and improve the use of the data. Hence, a Rock Slope Asset Management Program (RAMP) replacing RHRS was developed that provides decision-supporting data for geotechnical elements of highway projects or for stand-alone rock slope mitigation. RAMP includes forecasting tools such as the calculation of risk factors for areas subject to rockfall. RAMP also includes a rockfall-event tracking tool that provides data to help the department understand where priority maintenance must occur, track costs, and update risk forecasting tools. The updated RAMP has the potential to improve MDT's transportation system by improving rock slope conditions over time through life cycle cost-based project decisions, safety by risk reduction through selective project development, and reductions in the life cycle cost of maintaining safe slopes.

For more information on this project or the High Value Research competition, contact Sue Sillick at 444-7693 or ssillick@mt.gov.

Electronic Newsline Available — Sign up Now!

Newsline is available electronically for your convenience. If you wish to receive it electronically, simply send your e-mail address to Newsline Editor Sandra Waddell at swaddell@mt.gov, phone her at 444-7614, or drop a note to her attention at PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001.

Other changes, such as address updates and name changes, are also welcome anytime.

Transit Capital Management Plan

The MDT Transit Section completed its Transit Capital Management Plan (TCMP). This plan was developed by CDM Smith in collaboration with MDT to meet national asset management requirements. Transit Asset Management (TAM) is a business model that prioritizes funding based on the condition of transit assets to achieve or maintain transit networks in a state of good repair.

In July 2016, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a final rule requiring transit agencies to maintain and document minimum TAM standards. The new standards help transit agencies keep their systems operating smoothly and efficiently. Since MDT administers the FTA funds to subrecipients in 37 local communities, MDT was responsible for developing a group asset management plan for these transit providers by October 1, 2018.

The TCMP can be viewed at <https://mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/plans/MT-Group-TAMP.pdf>. For more information, contact David Jacobs at dajacobs@mt.gov or 444-9192.



Equipment Program to Improve Air Quality

Ten Montana communities and counties will be breathing a little easier with help from MDT through its Montana Air & Congestion Initiative (MACI) funding. The program is aimed at improving air quality through the use of state-of-the-art street maintenance equipment including flush trucks and street sweepers.

Communities eligible for the equipment are in nonattainment of federal air quality standards for particulate matter or are identified as "at-risk" of exceeding those standards, based on monitoring by the Department of Environmental Quality. The local government match for the program is 13.42 percent with MDT providing the balance through federal funds. Communities will use the new equipment to collect leftover traction sand and keep the streets clean of particulate matter and debris.

An estimated \$4.2 million will be invested in the purchase of this equipment to improve air quality. MDT developed the MACI program in 1998 to distribute funds from the Federal Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program to transportation-related air quality improvements.

For more information, contact Katy Callon at 444-7294 or kcallon@mt.gov.

Motoring Through Paradise: The Vigilante Trail

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian

Motoring was an adventure in the early 20th century and people usually didn't travel very far from home. Most roads were choked with dust during the summers, knee-deep in mud in the rainy seasons, and blocked by snowdrifts in the winters; maintenance was minimal year-round. But as more people bought cars, they demanded better roads. Some banded together and formed organizations dedicated to the construction of good roads, which, they believed, increased commerce and made for prosperous communities. One path to prosperity was through tourism. Tourists stayed in local hotels or auto camps, ate at restaurants, and spent money in local businesses. For many communities, like West Yellowstone and Ennis, a good road was just as important as the railroad.

By the mid-1910s, many out-of-state and local promoters established road associations to designate roads that connected important tourist attractions, like Yellowstone and Glacier national parks. The auto associations gave the routes imaginative names, like Yellowstone Trail, Park-to-Park Highway, Electric Highway, and Theodore Roosevelt International Highway. In Montana, the roads mainly connected Yellowstone and Glacier national parks, with "laterals" to other important attractions like the Little Bighorn Battlefield. By 1925, there were fourteen "named" highways crisscrossing the Treasure State, each with their own colorful symbols blazing the way.

In 1919, businessmen and promoters in Madison, Jefferson, and Silver Bow counties banded together to form the Vigilante Trail Association, one of the last such road organizations formed in Montana. The trail, which conjured images of stalwart pioneers battling despicable road agents in Montana's mining camps, provided a 150-mile connection between West Yellowstone and Butte. The Vigilante Trail was marked by a round red, white and blue shield with the dreaded vigilante symbol 3-7-77 featured prominently in the middle. The route passed through country steeped in Montana's early history, including Virginia City and Alder Gulch. The road also grazed some of Montana's best fisheries, including the Madison River, "the fisherman's paradise of the West."

The trail's promoters even came up with a little ditty to help lure visitors to southwestern Montana:

"Follow the Vigilante Trail
That winds like a snail
Thro the playgrounds of the West
The mountains so white
Loom up in the night
And the soft wind lulls you to rest."

Despite the tranquility hinted at by the rhyme, the promoters specifically hailed the road as "the most historic road in Montana." The trail association publicized the conflict between the road agents and the vigilantes as the big draw of the trail, directing motorists to visit "romantic and quaint" Virginia City and Robbers' Roost at Laurin. Only passing mention was made of the devastation caused by the gold dredges to Alder Gulch.

Improvements to the route were, at first, the responsibility of the counties it traversed. In 1922, the trail became eligible for Federal Aid as part of Montana's Seven Percent System. Despite that advantage, the Montana Highway Department had little money to spend on the route

during the lean years of the 1920s. In fact, it may have been

during novelist Hoffman Birney's trip to the area in 1928 while researching his book *Vigilantes!* that he wrote:

The roads of Montana are, I believe, the poorest of any state in the Union. Even the glorious scenery of the Rockies can't entirely make up for ruts, chug-holes, mud and detours – to say nothing of broken springs or stone-bruised tires. I turned off the highway some twenty miles from West Yellowstone, heading northward across Reynolds Pass toward Ennis, Montana, and Virginia City, my goal. The road was atrocious, the scenery superb.

Indeed, frequent road condition reports in the *Butte Montana Standard* described the Vigilante Trail as dusty, badly rutted or not recommended for traffic at all. The highway department began improving the road in 1933, paving it by 1941. By then, however, the Vigilante Trail, like the other named highways, had mostly faded from history. Today the route of the Vigilante Trail is US 287 to Ennis, then MT 287 through Virginia City to Twin Bridges where it connects with Montana 41. It terminates a few miles west of Whitehall on old US Highway 10.



MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment.

Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Montana Department of Transportation.

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Montana Department of Transportation**

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MDT Wants Your Comments On New Projects

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf, <https://mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml> or call 1-800-714-7296. You can mail comments on proposed projects to MDT at MDT Project Analysis Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 or e-mail them to: mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

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